Shrinathji Darshan

Shrinathji is a seven-year-old form of Krishna and the presiding deity of Vaishnavs who follow Pushti Marg. His other forms are known as Nidhi Swaroops. All these forms are housed in Havelis or our homes. It is believed that we can forge a strong bond of unconditional love with Krishna only if we keep uniting and separating with him regularly. So the deities of Pushti Marg give us their darshan only 8 times in a day. The darshan timings vary according to the weather and during festivities too. Shrinathji and all the Nidhi Swaroops reveal a different facet to us in each of these darshans....

Mangla Darshan

The conch shell is blown (Shankh Naad) to wake up the lord. Like us, Shrinathji too wakes up slightly later on chilly winter mornings and early during the summer.

He then has his Mangal bhog which usually comprises of milk, curd, pedas, butter and sugar candy, some farsan or puris.

The main doors of the temple are partially opened for the darshan because the lord has just woken up. Shrinathji has no ornaments and very few garments on his body now. We can see Shrinathji's Peethika, his right hand which is closed in a fist and both his legs only during this darshan. Arti is performed to ward off evil spirits.

- In Pushti Marg, we offer our emotions to our lord during the Arti. We should expect nothing in return for this from our lord. So in some Havelis we are not allowed to be blessed by the Arti.
- Sevaks always apply ‘attar' on their hands whenever they touch the Swaroop.
- Shrinathji then has his ‘Snaan' in warm water. He is gently wiped dry with a soft cloth after which some "Sugandhi/ Attar" is smeared on him. He is then dressed up for the day.

Shringar Darshan

Shrinathji is dressed up in garments and ornaments of different colours and textures depending on his mood, the weather and the festival that is being celebrated. Some dried fruits are offered to him after this.

During the darshan, a garland of fresh flowers is placed around him. A few stalks of lotuses or other seasonal flowers are inserted in the crook of his right arm. Shrinathji is now shown the ‘Darpan' so that he can check his appearance before he goes out. His flute and chadi are placed beside his hand. The lord then goes off to play with the gopas and gopis for a while.

- The Gunja mala is the only garland that Shrinathji wears all through the day and year. Even the poorest of the poor can make or buy this simple mala. A white gunja mala is offered to him during summers and a red one during winters.

- Different flowers are used to make the mala for Shrinathji. The lotus, rose and yellow chamelis represent Radha's love, white flowers symbolise Chandravali's friendship and red flowers, kadamb and champa flowers symbolise the Kumarikas' admiration and the koyal represents Jumnaji's devotion.

Gwal Darshan

Shrinathji is offered some kheer, rabdi or makhan mishri so that he can refresh himself after his playtime. A small Arti along with dhoop and deep is performed to ward off evil spirits.

Shrinathji is now ready to take his cows out to graze on the pastures. But first, he listens to the report that the head of the Goshala gives him because he is concerned about their well-being. This darshan is not open to the public during festivals.

Rajbhog Darshan

Shrinathji is tired, happy and hungry after spending time with his friends and cows on the pastures. The garland of fresh flowers is removed and placed on a stand. His flute, chadi, lotus stalks are removed from his hands so that he can enjoy his meal leisurely.

He is then offered delicious food for lunch. The delicacies and the menu vary according to the weather. A sprig of ‘Tulsi dal' (basil leaves) is placed above the food that he is offered. This represents the unconditional love of Tulsi.

During the darshan, a ‘Morchadi' and a ‘Chamar' are waved around him to keep insects away. A few toys and games are placed near him so that he can play for a while before taking his afternoon nap. A few of his outer garments are removed to make him feel more comfortable. The darshan closes a few minutes after the Arti is performed.

- Beedaji, Jhariji and Buntaji are always placed near him during all the darshans.
- Beedaji is a folded betel leaf with supari powder in it. The lord eats it at leisure after enjoying his meals.
- Jhariji is a small jar of water covered with a red muslin cloth and represents the bhakti of Jumnaji.
- Buntaji is a small snack box placed near the lord so that he can have a quick snack whenever he feels like it.
- Only sattvic food is offered to the lord. Onions, garlic, tomatoes, cabbage, radish etc. are never offered because they arouse rajasic and tamasic emotions of passion and ignorance within the lord and us too.

Utthapan Darshan

The ‘Shankh-naad'- conch shell is blown at around 4 p.m. to wake up Shrinathji from his nap. Sometimes the Veena is played during this darshan.

This darshan is open for a short while because Shrinathji has to round up all the cows in the pastures after this darshan. His

garlands, lotus stalks, outer clothes, flute and chadi are not in his hand during this darshan.

Bhog Darshan

Shrinathji is offered a light evening meal of fruits first. The Beedaji, Jhariji and Buntaji are replenished.

During this darshan, Shrinathji is adorned with fragrant floral garlands again. His flute and chadi are placed back in his hands.

It is believed that Shrinathji listens to the grievances of his devotees during this darshan through the "Dhruv Baari". He rounds up all his cows from the pastures and prepares to return home.

Bhog/Sandhya Arti Darshan

Shrinathji has returned home along with his cows. He ensures that all of them have safely returned to the cowsheds. Only then does he go back to his Haveli.

Another layer of his outer garments and most of his ornaments too are removed before this darshan. But the floral garlands, flute and chadi are still around him.

Arti is performed to keep evil spirits away.

Shayan Darshan

Shrinathji now retires for the night. During this darshan, Shrinathji's flute is kept beside him. The chadi is removed during the night. Arti is performed and ‘**B**eedaji' and ‘Jhariji' are replenished and kept by his bedside

Shrinathji gives his Shayan darshan during at Nathdwara from Dushera to Ram Navami and at Jatipura, Goverdhan, Mathura from Ram Navami to Dushera.

God leads as busy a life as all of us. Yet, he creates time for his devotees and is concerned about their welfare. He does not ask us to do anything for him. He says, "Just do my darshan! Even that is enough to anchor your mind, heart and soul!" God does not live in temples alone. He lives in our homes too. We can offer our seva to any one of his Nidhi Swaroops after getting it sanctified by Vallabhacharya's Goswamis. For those of us who cannot or are unable to do even this, even chanting or reading about God suffices. It is enough if we connect to any of his forms in some way or the other all through the day…..